File-finding 'Dragnet' misses boat

"Dragnet," a program for IBM-PC and PC-compatible personal computers from Access Softek, Berkcley, Calif., claims to solve two problems often encountered by business users of PCs — finding a file or document even though you've forgotten its name, and lo-

cating all files that reference a particular

subject.

In theory, all you have to do with Dragnet is load the program, specify the files or directories to be searched, provide a character string to look for, start up the search, and then go on with your regular work. The program then is sup-

posed to work "invisibly," building an "output file" on your disk that contains all the references to the specific subject. At your leisure, you can review the output file and see the outcome of the search—either lines, paragraphs or pages that contain the character string.

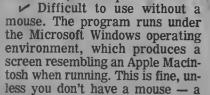
What a marvelous idea! However, this version of Dragnet failed to live up to its claims, when I attempted to use it on three IBM PC-compatible computers. It refused to load on two of them — an AT&T 6300 and a Wells American A*II — providing a variety of error

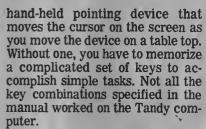
messages. And it finally worked on a Tandy 3000 HD, but not in color even though the Tandy supports other color programs.

Other problems encountered:

✓ Terrible documentation. The manual and tutorial are misleading and poorly written. However, once you learn the various

commands, it's simple to use.





✓ Background processing limited to other Windows programs while a search is taking place. In my case, I wanted to write my newsletter, but my WordPerfect program would not run. Only a select few of the most popular business programs run within Windows.

On the positive side, when it did work, it worked quickly and effectively, properly finding each character string I requested. It took about four minutes to search 10 files, each the size of this article, and to create an output file with the relevant paragraphs. In each case, the name of the file was given along with the text containing the matching string.

✓ At \$195, the program seems

overpriced, but I can imagine situations where the cost would be incidental compared to the value provided. Legal secretaries, for example, might be able to use the program to search hundreds or thousands of documents.

Should you rush out and purchase Dragnet for occasional business use? I'd say no, for two reasons: One, considering the problems apparent in this first version, the time and effort it takes to get up and running probably will be more than if you used the "global search" feature of your current word processing program with each document, one by one. And two, I suspect that the price will fall and competitive programs will be released in the coming months.

Dragnet tries, but fails to provide \$195 of value, at this time.

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